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C O N F I D E N T I A L ABUJA 001190

SIPDIS

THE HAGUE FOR OPCW DEL (MIKULAK); LONDON FOR GURNEY

E.O. 12958: 15 APR 2012

TAGS: [PARM](#) [PREL](#) [NI](#)

SUBJECT: NIGERIA ON BUSTANI -- HELP US CONVINCE AFRICA

ABUJA 1160 AND PREVIOUS (NOTAL)

CLASSIFIED BY CDA ANDREWS. REASON: 1.5(D).

1. (C) DCM April 16 spoke with Dr. Hakeem Baba-Ahmed, Chairman of Nigeria's National Council on the OPCW. Baba-Ahmed said Nigeria intended to vote for Bustani's removal and that he saw little likelihood of that position changing. However, taking this stance had put Nigeria "far from [its] natural allies...in the African Group."

2. (C) Baba-Ahmed thought a "well-packaged approach" in support of Bustani's removal "targeted at African and Asian countries without a strategic interest in OPCW" would reduce resistance to the USG initiative. As leader of the African Group in the OPCW, Nigeria now needed to bring along other countries. While Nigeria had no strategic interest in the OPCW, it had a strong strategic interest in sustaining its regional leadership role and could not afford to be too far out in front of too many other African countries, Baba-Ahmed continued.

3. (C) Nigeria, through Ambassador Dosunmu-Awolowo in The Hague, was endeavoring to convince other Africans that Africa had nothing to gain by Bustani's retention and that OPCW would face severe difficulties if the U.S. were to withdraw support, Baba-Ahmed said. Nigeria hoped that the USG would continue to lobby other Africans energetically, highlighting that those programs from which Africa benefits (international cooperative assistance, training, recruitment of staff, etc.) would suffer no negative impact from Bustani's removal.

4. (C) Baba-Ahmed also asked DCM if there were "strategic reasons" other than those outlined in previous demarches for U.S. opposition to Bustani. DCM briefly recapitulated our concerns, said he was unaware of other considerations, and suggested that he (Baba-Ahmed) or Dosunmu-Awolowo contact USDEL experts if Nigeria had specific questions. Baba-Ahmed reiterated that Nigeria had announced its position in favor of removing Bustani and would be most unlikely to change it. But the GON would have an additional level of comfort if it felt certain it understood all the issues, he added.

5. (C) Comment: There is a tendency here to look for hidden agendas; USDEL may wish to seek out Baba-Ahmed in The Hague (he plans to arrive morning of April 20). Having taken a decision to support the USG on Bustani, Nigeria is unlikely to change course. However, the possibility cannot be ruled out completely if fellow African countries exert strong pressure in the other direction.

ANDREWS